

Trip Planner

BADLANDS NATIONAL PARK IS VISITED BY OVER ONE MILLION PEOPLE EACH YEAR. WHILE individually our actions may seem small, collectively, we can have a dramatic impact on this landscape. When traveling in the park please know and follow the park rules and regulations and practice techniques that will *leave no trace* of your passing.

Plan Ahead and Prepare

Weather

Badlands weather is unpredictable, at best. Prepare for extreme weather. Heavy rain, hail and extremely high winds occur through the summer. Lightning strikes are common. During a severe electrical storm, stay away from exposed places, ridges, or isolated trees. Summer temperatures often exceed 100°F. Sunscreen, a hat, and water are essential to avoid sunburn, dehydration, and heat stroke. It is also advisable to wear long pants.

Water

Water found naturally in the Badlands is full of silt and undrinkable. It will quickly clog even the best filter or purifier. Water can be obtained from the Cedar Pass Campground, the Pinnacles Ranger Station and the White River Visitor Center. There is no other potable water available in the park. Always carry water with you. You should carry a minimum of one gallon of water per person per day in the Badlands.

Cactus and Other Plants

Statistically, the most dangerous park resident is the prickly pear cactus. It causes the highest percentage of our first aid responses by piercing shoes, socks, and gloves. It occurs throughout the park, is quite low to the ground and often under other plants such as grass. Always wear heavy leather boots and long pants when exploring the prairie. Leather gloves are also helpful. The park has poison ivy in vegetated areas, such as Cliff Shelf Nature Trail. Remember that poison ivy leaves occur in bunches of three. Examples of poison ivy are found in the herbarium in the Cedar Pass Contact Station.

Hiking and Backpacking

Keep in mind that Badlands National Park currently has an open backcountry policy. This means that we have no permit system in place and very few established trails. While this offers a wild hiking experience, it also means that there is no registration process allowing for your whereabouts to be known. You are truly on your own and are responsible for your own safety. The park is also full of prairie dog towns, a critical part of the prairie ecosystem. Use care when exploring them to avoid turned ankles or contact with burrow residents.

Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces

Seemingly sturdy, the Badlands formations are extremely unstable and unsuitable for any type of rock climbing. Do not attempt technical climbing in the park. Park regulations do permit exploration of the Badlands. However, scrambling up formations and sliding back down creates scars. It also changes the natural erosional patterns, creating human-impacted features. In high-use areas such as the Cliff Shelf and Fossil Exhibit Trails, please stay on the established trails. Serious injuries occur as visitors become disoriented or fearful when attempting to return from off-trail adventures. Be safe. Be low impact. Stay on trails.

Off road travel is **not** allowed for any wheeled vehicles including cars, motorcycles, and bicycles. Travel is limited only to established roads. Bicycles are not allowed on the trails, prairie, or formations.

Leave What You Find

All collecting in the park is prohibited. Removing, defacing, or destroying any plants, animals, minerals, fossils, rocks or cultural objects is illegal. It also diminishes the park’s resources and other visitors’ experiences. Taking even the smallest rock or picking flowers is punishable by a fine.

Campfires

Campfires are **not** permitted due to the extreme danger of prairie wild fire. Camp stoves or contained charcoal grills can be used in campgrounds or picnic areas. Backpacking stoves or similar self-contained stoves are preferred and are the only cooking devices permitted in the backcountry. Due to the lack of trees, wood gathering is **not** permitted.

Respect Wildlife


Viewing wildlife is a popular visitor activity in national parks. Please, keep the *wild* in wildlife. If an animal reacts at all to your presence, you are too close. Do not be lured in by “cute” or “tame” behavior. All wildlife – deer, prairie dogs, bison, snakes, and even birds – can cause serious injury.

Bison can run 30 miles per hour and may weigh up to 2000 pounds. Bison injure more visitors to national parks each year than bears, wolves, and coyotes combined. They are not simply large stock animals. They are wildlife. Never come within 100 feet of a bison.

Many visitors ask about the park’s only poisonous snake, the **prairie rattlesnake**. Like all snakes, the prairie rattler cannot control its body temperature internally. To survive, it must seek out resting places where temperatures are between 65° - 85°F. Choice hiding spots include under ledges, rocks and shrubbery or in prairie dog burrows. In the evening, they gravitate toward dark surfaces that retain warmth, such as paved trails, roads, and sidewalks. Prairie rattlers are the least aggressive of the rattlesnake family and attempt to avoid humans. Wear long pants and closed toe shoes, and do not place your hands out of sight, such as reaching over a ledge to pull yourself up. Snakes do not have ears. They sense, rather than “hear,” you coming through the vibrations you create on the ground and surrounding vegetation.


Unfortunately, almost as popular as viewing wildlife is feeding wildlife. Feeding park wildlife is illegal. Please do not feed any park animals, including birds. Wildlife can become aggressive with humans and dependent on us for their subsistence. They lose their natural instinct to hunt or forage. Most human food is high in sodium, which leads to rapid dehydration and eventual death. Some animals have even been found with styrofoam and plastic in their stomachs during autopsies. Resist temptation. Don’t feed begging animals.

Be Considerate of Other Visitors



Pets are allowed only on paved or gravel roads and in developed areas such as campgrounds and must be kept on a leash at all times. They are not allowed on trails or in public buildings.

Badlands Weather				
Month	Average High Temperature	Average Low Temperature	Record High/Low	Average Precipitation (inches)
May	72°F	46°F	102°F / 20°F	2.75
June	83°F	56°F	109°F / 34°F	3.12
July	92°F	62°F	111°F / 42°F	1.94
August	91°F	61°F	110°F / 35°F	1.45
September	81°F	51°F	105°F / 25°F	1.23
October	68°F	39°F	97°F / 2°F	0.90



National Park Service

U.S. Department of the Interior

Badlands National Park

Badlands National Park protects over 244,000 acres of sculpted Badlands and mixed-grass prairie. The park is home to a variety of plants and animals. The Badlands formations also contain the fossils of creatures that roamed the land millions of years ago.

This seemingly harsh land has been a home for people for thousands of years. Today, the vibrant culture of the Oglala Lakota remains alive on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation which contains the South Unit of Badlands National Park. Ranches dot the countryside outside the park. Some are descendants of original homesteaders who settled here and managed to call this land home.

Highway 240 has been designated a Scenic Byway and is your primary access to the scenery of Badlands National Park.

Mailing Address

Badlands National Park
PO Box 6
Interior, South Dakota 57750

Park Website

www.nps.gov/badl/

Email

badl_information@nps.gov

Fax Number

(605) 433-5404


Park Headquarters

(605) 433-5361

The National Park Service cares for the special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.

Visitor Facilities

Ben Reifel Visitor Center

 Located at park headquarters, the Ben Reifel Visitor Center re-opened in late 2005 after a year of renovation with new exhibits, a theater, restrooms, and enlarged book-store. The information desk is staffed by NPS representatives 362 days per year, closed only on New Years Day, Thanksgiving Day, and Christmas Day.

White River Visitor Center

 Located on the Pine Ridge Reservation off Highway 27, this contact station is operated by the Oglala Sioux Parks and Recreation Authority and offers a staffed information desk, park orientation movie, exhibits, restrooms, and water. Contact (605) 455-2878 for more information. Closed during winter.


Picnic Areas

 Picnic tables are located at Bigfoot Pass and Conata Picnic Areas in addition to tables at the Ben Reifel Visitor Center and White River Visitor Center. Bigfoot Pass and Conata Picnic Areas do not have water available. Remember that open campfires are **not** permitted.

Watch for this logo as you travel through Badlands and other national parks. These signs and notices indicate how the National Park Service is using your entrance dollars and the fees paid for National Park Passes.



A catalogue of Badlands Fee Projects is available at <http://www.nps.gov/badl> or at the Ben Reifel Visitor Center.

Cedar Pass Lodge

 Full menu dining, air conditioned cabins, gift shop, restrooms, bagged ice and recycling are available. The Cedar Pass Lodge is typically open by mid-April and closes in mid-October. For reservations and rates:

Cedar Pass Lodge
P.O. Box 5
Interior, South Dakota 57750
Phone: (605) 433-5460


Cedar Pass Campground

 Located near the Ben Reifel Visitor Center, Cedar Pass Campground has 96 sites. Camping fees are \$10 per night per campsite. The campground is operated on a first come, first served basis and has a fourteen day limit. Cold running water, flush toilets, covered picnic tables, and trash containers are available. The campground does not have showers or electrical hookups. A dump station is available with a \$1.00 fee per use. Campground hosts are on duty during the summer to assist in registration and provide information. Look for them in the afternoon and early evenings at the campground entrance booth. Open campfires are **not** permitted.

GROUP CAMPING

Four campsites are available in the Cedar Pass Campground for organized groups with a designated leader. The nightly fee is \$2.50 per person with a minimum fee of \$25.00. Advance reservations are required and can be made by contacting (605) 433-5233 or by writing Group Camping Reservations; Badlands National Park; P.O. Box 6; Interior, South Dakota 57750

Sage Creek Primitive Campground

 Open year round, access to this campground may be limited in winter and during the spring rainy season due to road conditions. The Sage Creek Rim Road is remote and unpaved. It is not recommended for large recreational vehicles. The campground is currently free and offers pit toilets and picnic tables. There is a fourteen day limit. There is no water available. Open campfires are **not** permitted.

Accessibility

 The Ben Reifel Visitor Center and White River Visitor Center are both accessible to wheelchair users. Examples of fossils and rocks provide a tactile experience for all who enjoy handling objects, such as rocks, fossils, and skins, and is appropriate for the visually impaired.

- The Fossil Exhibit Trail and the Door Trail are both accessible to wheelchair users.
- The Cedar Pass Campground has two accessible campsites. All campground restrooms are accessible. One group campsite is accessible.
- The Cedar Pass Lodge dining room and gift shop, as well as some cabins, meet accessibility standards.
- Several summer ranger programs, such as the Fossil Talk, are accessible to wheelchair users. Others include adaptations for visual or hearing impaired visitors.
- A complete listing of accessible facilities is available from the information desk of the Ben Reifel Visitor Center or may be downloaded from the park website at <http://www.nps.gov/badl/>

Backcountry Camping

Want to walk on the wild side of Badlands National Park? How about a trip into the park's backcountry or designated wilderness areas? While most visitors stick to the roads, overlooks and designated trails, there is more of the park to explore. Over 64,000 acres of the park have been designated by Congress as the Badlands Wilderness Area, a place to remain forever wild. The wilderness is divided into two units. The Sage Creek Unit is the largest. Located in the northwest part of the park, its boundaries follow the park boundaries to the south and west, the Sage Creek Rim Road to the north and the Conata Road to the east. The smaller Conata Unit is located south of the Badlands Loop Road between the Bigfoot Pass Picnic Area and the Conata Road. These areas are shown on the park map you received at the entrance station.

Before you venture into the backcountry or wilderness, there are some things you should know:

- Permits are not currently required for overnight stays in the Badlands backcountry. You should contact a staff member at the Ben Reifel Visitor Center or Pinnacles Ranger Station before setting out on an overnight trip. Backcountry registers are located at the Conata Picnic Area, the Sage Creek Basin Overlook and Sage Creek Campground for the park to maintain use figures.
- Twisted or fractured ankles are the most common serious injury sustained in Badlands National Park. Make sure you are wearing sturdy boots with good ankle support. The park is home to many burrowing animals. Watch your footing.
- Campfires are **not** allowed under any circumstances. Use a backpacking stove.
- Pets are **not** permitted on trails, in backcountry or Wilderness Areas.
- Campsites must be located at least 0.5 miles from a road or trail and must not be visible from a roadway.
- There is little to no water available in the backcountry. The small amounts of water found are not drinkable or filterable due to the high sediment content. Always carry at least one gallon of water per person per day.
- All refuse must be carried out. Use the cat hole method to dispose of human waste. Dig a small hole 6 to 8 inches deep and a minimum of 200 feet from any watercourse. Since animals will often dig up cat holes and scatter the toilet paper, it is preferred that you pack out any toilet paper used. If you must bury toilet paper, use a minimal amount and bury with at least 6 inches of soil. Strain food particles from wastewater, pack out food scraps and scatter remaining water more than 200 feet from any stream channel.
- Check the weather forecast. Severe thunderstorms are common during the summer. So are days above 100°F. September and early October are the best backpacking months.

Exploring the South Unit

In 1976, Badlands National Monument entered into an agreement with the Oglala Lakota Nation to protect 122,000 acres that had been used as an aerial bombing range during World War II. This doubled the size of the Monument and led Congress to redesignate the area as Badlands National Park in 1978. The new Badlands National Park was now subdivided into two units: the North Unit, consisting of park land north of Highway 44, and the South Unit, park land south of Highway 44.

The White River Visitor Center was opened in 1978 and has remained opened during the summer months to provide orientation to the South Unit and Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. Due to the quantity of unexploded ordnance that continues to litter the areas used for bombing practice, a multi-agency task force is working toward clearing the South Unit of these devices. Until the task force is reasonably certain that an area is cleared of detonating devices, we cannot encourage visitors to explore much of the South Unit. Cellular phones can detonate these devices.




The South Unit remains largely undeveloped and lacks access points, such as roads and trails. Exploration can be accomplished only by using 4-wheel-drive vehicles or on foot. The South Unit is a protected natural area and is not managed as a four-wheel-drive recreation area. Travelers must remain on existing primitive road tracks. Do not leave these tracks to go "four wheeling." Explorers must often cross private land to access the public land. Always obtain permission from landowners for vehicular or foot access before setting out for Cuny Table, Stronghold Table, and Palmer Creek. Be prepared with alternative destinations if land owners do not provide permission to cross their property. Hikers in the South Unit must be experienced map readers. Plan on a minimum of two days to hike in and out of the remote Palmer Creek area.


One of the few designated roads is The Sheep Mountain Road, 7 miles south of the town of Scenic on Pennington County Road 589. The stunning views from windswept Sheep Mountain Table are accessible under dry conditions by high clearance vehicles. The road is impassable when wet or snow covered. Please use caution along the unstable cliff edges of the table. Sheep Mountain Table is designated a day use area. Overnight camping is not allowed.

The South Unit contains many sites sacred to the Oglala Lakota and other American Indian cultures. Please show respect by not touching or removing objects tied to trees and shrubs. All artifacts must be left in place. Remember to practice Leave No Trace principles at all times in the Stronghold District.

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Day Hiking

Trail	Round Trip		Description
	(mi/km)	(avg. time)	
Door Trail  Accessible to viewpoint	.75/.47	20 minutes	Easy. An accessible ¼ mile boardwalk leads through a break in the Badlands Wall known as “the Door” and to a view of the Badlands. From there, the maintained trail ends. Travel beyond this point is at your own risk.
Window Trail  Accessible with assistance	.25/.16	20 minutes	Easy. This short trail leads to a natural window in the Badlands Wall with a view of an intricately eroded canyon. Please stay on trail.
Notch Trail	1.5/.93	1½ -2 hours	Moderate to Strenuous. After meandering through a canyon, this trail climbs a steep ladder and follows a ledge to “the Notch” for a dramatic view of the White River Valley. Trail begins at the south end of the Door and Window parking area. Watch for drop offs. Not recommended for anyone with a fear of heights. Treacherous during or after heavy rains.
Castle Trail	10/6.2	5 hours	Moderate. The longest trail in the park begins at the Door and Window Parking area and travels 5 miles one way to the Fossil Exhibit Trail. Relatively level, the path passes along some Badlands formations.
Cliff Shelf Nature Trail	.5/.31	½ hour	Moderate. This loop trail follows boardwalks and climbs stairs through a juniper forest perched along the Badlands Wall. A small pond occasionally exists in the area and draws wildlife such as deer or bighorn sheep. Climbs approximately 200 feet in elevation. Please stay on trail.
Saddle Pass	.25/.16	½ -1 hour	Strenuous. This short trail climbs up the Badlands Wall to a view over the White River Valley. The trail ends where it connects with the Castle and Medicine Root Loop Trails.
Medicine Root Loop	4/2.5	2 hours	Moderate. This gently rolling spur trail connects with the Castle Trail near the Old Northeast Road or at the intersection of the Castle and Saddle Pass Trails. Trail users are provided the opportunity to explore the mixed grass prairie while enjoying views of the Badlands in the distance. Watch for cactus.
Fossil Exhibit Trail  Accessible	.25/.16	20 minutes	Easy. This fully accessible trail features fossil replicas and exhibits on now extinct creatures that once roamed the area.



Weather warnings and forecasts for Badlands National Park and vicinity can be heard on NOAA Weather Radio 162.450 MHz. Forecasts can also be obtained by calling 605-341-7531.

Emergency? Call 911

Local Services

Town of Interior: 2 miles west of park headquarters on Highway 44. Post office, grocery store, gas, mechanic, convenience items year round. Restaurants, campgrounds, showers, and motel available seasonally.

Town of Wall: 30 miles northwest of park headquarters using the Badlands Loop Road or exit 110 on Interstate 90. A full service community including banking services, pharmacy, and medical clinic.

Cactus Flat: Exit 131 on Interstate 90. Headquarters for Minuteman Missile National Historic Site. Gas availabe year round, Convenience store, motel, restaurant, and camping seasonally.

Other local communities with services: Kadoka, Philip, Scenic, Wasta, Sharps Corner and Kyle. Rapid City is located 75 miles west of park headquarters.

Rules of the Road

Motorist Warning: The speed limit in the park is 45 miles per hour unless posted otherwise. Seat belts are required for all passengers at all times.

Drive cautiously and use pull outs to allow others to pass safely or to view wildlife. Do not pull off the road unless there is sufficient pavement for your vehicle to be completely out of the lane of traffic. Do not pull onto grass. The underside of your vehicle can start a prairie fire.

Pedestrians have the right of way. Vehicles must stop for pedestrians in crosswalks. It’s the LAW.

Cyclists

Bicyclist Warning: The Badlands Loop Road is narrow with many curves. Watch out for large RVs. Bicycles are prohibited on park trails. Bicyclists are permitted on all park paved and unpaved roads and must obey all traffic regulations. Always ride with the flow of the traffic. The existing road system provides a variety of opportunities for the cyclist. For your convenience, bicycle racks are provided at the park visitor centers, key overlooks, and Cedar Pass Lodge.

See and be seen: Wear bright colors and a helmet. A map of suggested routes is available at the park website at <http://www.nps.gov/badl/>

Cycles are allowed only on designated paved, gravel, and dirt roads within Badlands National Park. They are not allowed on hiking trails, closed roads, off-road, off-trail, or in the backcountry.

Motorcyclist Warning: Only the Badlands Loop Road is paved. Use extreme caution when travelling on gravel surfaces.

Protect Your Park

- Leave fossils, flowers, rocks and animals where you find them.
- Preserve your heritage. Do not enter, alter or deface archeological sites. Do not collect artifacts.
- All vehicles and bicycles must travel on designated roads.
- Stay on designated trails in high-use areas such as Fossil Exhibit and Cliff Shelf Nature Trails.
- Observe the speed limit and watch out for wildlife crossing the roads.

Protect Yourself


- Drink at least one gallon of water each day.
- During a lightning storm avoid lone trees and high ridges. Return to your vehicle if possible.
- Be careful near cliff edges and on Badlands formations, especially when surfaces are wet.
- Wear clothing and sunscreen to protect yourself from the sun.
- Wear sturdy boots or shoes to protect your feet from cactus spines.

Join Badlands Natural History Association

The Badlands Natural History Association, or BNHA, was established in 1959 to work in cooperation with the National Park Service in furthering its scientific, educational, historical and interpretive activities. Since then, BNHA has contributed over \$1 million to the park. Sales of BNHA items in the park contact station results in donations to the park’s education and resource management programs.

BNHA is a nonprofit organization that has an active membership program. To become a member of BNHA, complete the membership form and turn in with dues payment at the Cedar Pass Contact Station or mail to BNHA, P.O. Box 47, Interior, South Dakota 57750)Members receive a 15% discount on all sales of BNHA materials and will often receive a discount at other National Park Service bookstores.

Your membership dues are used directly to enhance the experience of visitors to the area. An investment to the future, your contribution is a perpetuation of the National Park idea.



Your membership dues will be gratefully received, immediately acknowledged and efficiently used. Your membership dues are tax-deductible.

☐ Individual Association Membership \$20 per person per calendar year. Includes membership card allowing you a 15% discount at BNHA stores and discounts with other cooperating associations in the U.S. and special mailings through the year.

☐ Lifetime Membership \$250 per person. Includes membership card allowing you a 15% discount at BNHA stores and discounts with other cooperating associations in the U.S. and special mailings.

Name

Address

City

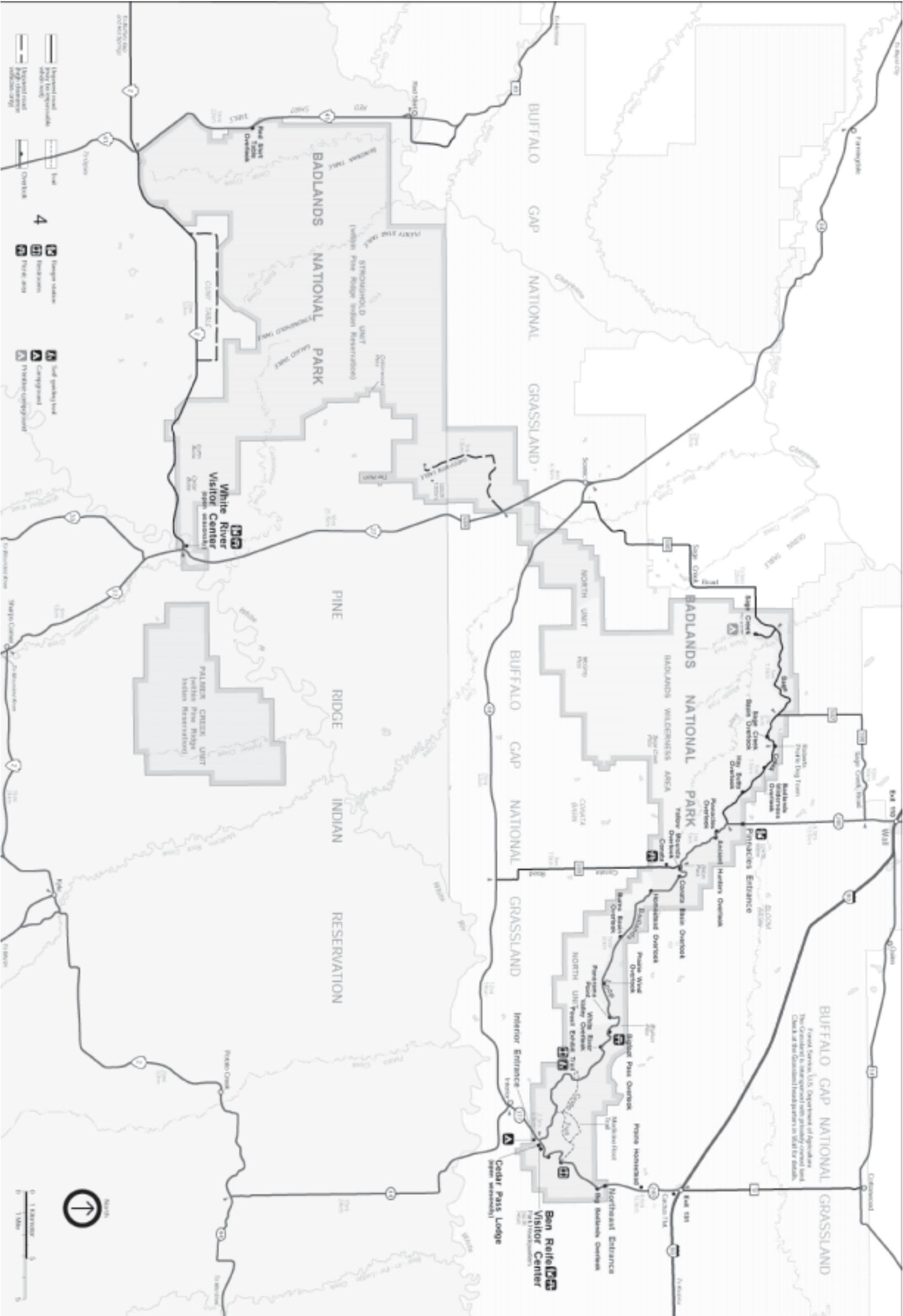
State

Zip

Phone

Amount Enclosed

Badlands National Park Official Map



Entrance Fees

7 Day Pass	Price
Passenger Vehicles (Fee covers all passengers in vehicle)	\$15.00
Motorcycles	\$10.00
Bicyclists, Pedestrians (Per person)	\$ 7.50

Note: 50% of the entrance fees collected at Badlands National Park are distributed to the Oglala Sioux Parks and Recreation Authority to support economic development.

Commercial Vehicles should contact (605) 433-5361 for rates.

Annual and Lifetime Passes

The National Park Service proudly offers a series of passes for park visitors. The following passes are available at Badlands National Park.

Annual Passes
Badlands National Park Pass
National Parks Pass

Lifetime Passes
Golden Age Passport
Must be 62 years of age or older and U.S. citizen
Golden Access Passport
For permanently disabled U.S. citizens

Travelling to Badlands National Park

By car: Travel Interstate 90 to either exit 131 (Cactus Flat) or exit 110 (Wall). You will travel 7 to 10 miles to a park entrance station. From Rapid City you may also travel east on Highway 44. Refer to map.

Other: Public transportation to the park is not available. The closest airport is Rapid City, South Dakota, 75 miles west of the park. Commercial bus lines make stops in Wall, South Dakota. Car rentals are available in Rapid City.

Badlands National Park, established as a National Monument in 1939, protects nearly 244,000 acres of dramatically carved formations, native North American prairie, ancient fossilized life, and a human history spanning 12,000 years. 64,000 acres has been designated the Badlands Wilderness Area under the Wilderness Act of 1964.

